



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

August 20, 2014

Mr. Alexander Smith
Federal Transit Administration, Region IX
201 Mission Street, Suite 1650
San Francisco, CA 94105

Subject: Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Mid-Coast Corridor
Transit Project, San Diego, California (CEQ #20140192)

Dear Mr. Smith:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the above-referenced document pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

We commend the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) for seeking to improve transit service in the Mid-Coast Corridor. We hope that as indicated in this and prior documents, if constructed, these improvements will increase transit ridership, decrease automobile congestion, and lead to air quality improvements.

We reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the previous version of this project and provided comments on May 8, 1995, and reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and provided comments on August 13, 2001. The FEIS resolved the concerns that we had identified following our review of the previous DEIS. We then reviewed the first Supplemental DEIS (SDEIS), which described an updated project, and provided comments on July 17, 2013. We rated that document as LO, *Lack of Objections*, and provided comments on coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board regarding impacts to wetlands and waters, and encouraged continued efforts to minimize impacts to wetlands and waters during future design and construction. We also encouraged consultation with the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District and South Coast Air Quality Management District to minimize construction emissions that would exceed significance thresholds, and provided comments on construction noise, and multimodal access and transit-supportive development around stations.

We understand that this SDEIS was prepared due to the identification of San Diego fairy shrimp, a federally listed endangered species, within the project area subsequent to circulation of the first SDEIS and that the scope of this document is limited to the evaluation of impacts to that species, discussion of the Section 7 consultation process, and identification of mitigation measures. We

defer to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on review of potential impacts and proposed mitigation for impacts to listed species. We therefore have no comments on this document and have rated it as LO, *Lack of Objections*. Please see the enclosed *Summary of EPA Rating Definitions* for a description of our rating system.

We appreciate the opportunity to review the SDEIS and look forward to your responses to our comments on the previous SDEIS in the Supplemental FEIS. When that document is released for public review, please send one CD copy to the address above (mail code: ENF-4-2). If you have any questions, please contact Carolyn Mulvihill, the lead reviewer for this project, at 415-947-3554 or mulvihill.carolyn@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carolyn Mulvihill for". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Connell Dunning, Transportation Team Supervisor
Environmental Review Office
Communities and Ecosystems Division

Enclosures: Summary of EPA Rating Definitions

cc: Leslie Blanda, SANDAG

SUMMARY OF EPA RATING DEFINITIONS*

This rating system was developed as a means to summarize the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) level of concern with a proposed action. The ratings are a combination of alphabetical categories for evaluation of the environmental impacts of the proposal and numerical categories for evaluation of the adequacy of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE ACTION

"LO" (Lack of Objections)

The EPA review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the proposal. The review may have disclosed opportunities for application of mitigation measures that could be accomplished with no more than minor changes to the proposal.

"EC" (Environmental Concerns)

The EPA review has identified environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment. Corrective measures may require changes to the preferred alternative or application of mitigation measures that can reduce the environmental impact. EPA would like to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

"EO" (Environmental Objections)

The EPA review has identified significant environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to provide adequate protection for the environment. Corrective measures may require substantial changes to the preferred alternative or consideration of some other project alternative (including the no action alternative or a new alternative). EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

"EU" (Environmentally Unsatisfactory)

The EPA review has identified adverse environmental impacts that are of sufficient magnitude that they are unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health or welfare or environmental quality. EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts. If the potentially unsatisfactory impacts are not corrected at the final EIS stage, this proposal will be recommended for referral to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).

ADEQUACY OF THE IMPACT STATEMENT

"Category 1" (Adequate)

EPA believes the draft EIS adequately sets forth the environmental impact(s) of the preferred alternative and those of the alternatives reasonably available to the project or action. No further analysis or data collection is necessary, but the reviewer may suggest the addition of clarifying language or information.

"Category 2" (Insufficient Information)

The draft EIS does not contain sufficient information for EPA to fully assess environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment, or the EPA reviewer has identified new reasonably available alternatives that are within the spectrum of alternatives analysed in the draft EIS, which could reduce the environmental impacts of the action. The identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussion should be included in the final EIS.

"Category 3" (Inadequate)

EPA does not believe that the draft EIS adequately assesses potentially significant environmental impacts of the action, or the EPA reviewer has identified new, reasonably available alternatives that are outside of the spectrum of alternatives analysed in the draft EIS, which should be analysed in order to reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts. EPA believes that the identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussions are of such a magnitude that they should have full public review at a draft stage. EPA does not believe that the draft EIS is adequate for the purposes of the NEPA and/or Section 309 review, and thus should be formally revised and made available for public comment in a supplemental or revised draft EIS. On the basis of the potential significant impacts involved, this proposal could be a candidate for referral to the CEQ.

*From EPA Manual 1640, Policy and Procedures for the Review of Federal Actions Impacting the Environment.

